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ABSTRACT

Compiled for the beginner in the field of the history of reading, the list of resources presented in this paper may serve as a point of departure for someone interested in historical literature beyond Nila Banton Smith's "American Reading Instruction" and E.B. Huey's "Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading." Introductory information precedes the references, which are placed into categories that include general surveys, the history of American reading, ancient and medieval history of reading, sources and commentary on research methodology, historical surveys of reading subfields, special topics, and recent published collections of papers or published articles. Short annotations accompany each entry. (EL)

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HISTORY OF READING: RESOURCES AND REFERENCES FOR SOMEONE LIKE ME

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As has been aptly said, referring to the immensity of the field of the history of books and of reading, it is "interdisciplinarity run riot." It "looks less like a field than a tropical rain forest" states Robert Darnton, a knowledgeable scholar and spokesman in this area. He further adds:

> ". . . the explorer can hardly make his way across it. At every step he becomes entangled in a luxuriant undergrowth of journal articles and disoriented by the crisscrossing of disciplines, analytical bibliography point in this direction, the sociology of knowledge in that, while history, English, and comparative literature stake out overlapping territories. He is beset by claims to newness--la nouvelle bibliographie materielle, 'the new literary history'--and bewildered by competing methodologies, which would have him collating editions, compiling statistics, decoding copyright law, wading through reams of manuscript, heaving at the bar of a reconstructed common press, and psychoanalyzing the mental processes of readers. The history of books has become so crowded with ancillary disciplines that one can no longer see its general contours. How can the book historian neglect the history of libraries, of publishing, of paper, of type, of reading? But how can he master their technologies, especially when they appear in imposing, foreign formulations, like Geschichte der Appellstruktur and Bibliometrie bibliologique?" (Darnton, 1983)

Owing its most modern roots to scholarly concerns in France in the 1960's, there has been an increasing amount of international scholarship in what is most often called "the history of the book." Included within this broad area are the interests of this IRA special interest group, the history of reading instruction or more generally, the history of reading. Whatever the title of the field, it is very apparent that this area of history is an important new discipline.

Referring to the burst of international scholarly activity since 1980, Darnton adds "It is an area of research that has developed so rapidly during the last few years that it seems likely to win a place alongside fields such

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as the history of science and the history of art in the canon of scholarly disciplines." In the same article he refers to the field as "one of the few sectors in the human sciences where there is a mood of expansion and a flurry of fresh ideas."

In its larger contexts, it is a field now scrambled and topsy turvy in appearance, certainly bewildering in size but very important to reading teachers and educators like ourselves.

My own interest in the field began innocuously enough with the Deseret Alphabet, an experiment in the days of Brigham Young in Utah history. From there my attention progressed unsystematically to, first Noah Webster, then primarily through footnotes and bibliographies to William Holmes McGuffey, the Progressive and New England Primer eras, literacy in Biblical societies, the Alexandrian Library, the Greek and Roman periods, the middle ages, British roots of American reading instruction, and the history of journalism. Child and adolescent literature as well as library science have also become interests and on my own campus, the interlibrary loan staff this past year claimed me to be their best customer. Gratitude is also due a sympathetic historian-department chairmen who not only underwrites the purchase of books but understands the allure of the field and is a voracious reader himself. From an inspection of the references, I plead guilty to academic dilettantism but in looking back over these past five years, I can't think of anything I've done or studied that has been more stimulating and professionally self renewing. The history of reading provides a very satisfying and fulfilling perspective, one that I highly recommend if you are not yet into it.

Actually, I've been compensating for a lack of history in my own educational background, indulging an increasing fascination with the field,

enjoying the perspective it provides my work in the present, and satisfying a general desire to study religious influences in education history. If you also happen to like biography like I do, it is but a short step from the history of reading to the lives of the those who made it. I have spent some very happy hours with biographies of Webster and McGuffey, and have large photographs of each on my office wall. Prominently displayed just to the left of those pictures are copies of the New England Primer, the bluebook speller, a set of McGuffey Readers, a hornbook, and a republished edition of Vol. I of Webster's 1828 dictionary. These are interest teasers designed to entrap the unwary who venture into my office and wonder what in the world is all that old stuff on the window ledge.

More seriously, this new historical interest also initiated a national study being reported today with Janet Miller, to find out what attention the field is receiving in graduate programs for reading educators. A few writing efforts since 1980 followed, enough to convince me that outlets for publication are very limited, at least in the traditional places where reading educators usually publish. Editors in our field are unfamiliar with, and I think intimidated, by historical analyses. They do not resemble the accepted empirical fare surrounding teaching techniques that dominate our journals. Perhaps for them the holistic historical conclusion not supported by a statistical test of significance seems suspect and tainted. Happily, however, things are looking up. In recent years, definitions of research have greatly broadened and the historical study has been given more credence in graduate school dissertations and some journals. Incidentally, our IRA journals in the most recent 12-month period will have published three historical articles. Historical perspectives in reviews of literature are also being encouraged.

Very evident from our national survey with Dr. Miller is that few reading educators are familiar with the historical literature beyond Nila Banton Smith's, American Reading Instruction and for a few others, Huey's The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading. For those who want to go beyond these references, the following resources are offered with a fervent invitation to enjoy the stimulation they most certainly will bring. If you haven't already become involved with the history of reading, this list will help. At least it can serve as a point of departure. And incidentally, if your interest persists, you will meet some very nice people along the way. Marked with an asterisk on the reference list are titles of overviews judged useful for readers desiring only a general acquaintance with the field. Note also that the list includes resources and publications from English speaking countries only with an emphasis on the American past, though not exclusively so. Please also note, however, that the history of reading is an internationally fertile field for scholarship and publication, especially in France and Germany. A number of high quality papers and unpublished manuscripts in English looking for publishers also exist. Although I've obtained a few of these by writing authors, none are included on this list.

In summary presented here, later to be refined and integrated with our national study and also to be accompanied by a rationale for the study of history, is a list of resources and a few annotated references for the beginner in the field. The references again are unsystematic and personal, reflecting the disjointed evolution of my own interests but hopefully helpful for someone like me who is a newcomer to the field.

Resources

1. In the U.S. the History of Reading special interest group of the International Reading Association founded in 1975 holds national and international section meetings as part of IRA conventions. A newsletter is available and highly recommended.
2. In Britain the Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas was founded in 1984 and publishes a newsletter and proceedings of its meetings.
3. A similar history group, also founded in 1984, exists as part of the Australian Reading Association. A newsletter is available.
4. The American Antiquarian Society of Worcester, Mass. operates an outstanding library, holds meetings, publishes proceedings, provides a few study scholarships and a free newsletter on the history of the book in American culture.
5. The Center for the Book in the U.S. Library of Congress publishes a free newsletter, other history publications, and sponsors a lecture series on the history of the book.
6. The IRA's Annual Summary of Investigations Relating to Reading identifies and abstracts research published during the previous year. Subcategories in different areas are history oriented and have averaged annually about 36 articles and books in each of the past six years.
7. The Gray research collection also has a few titles, mostly empirical studies in its history sections.
8. Bibliographies and footnotes of historical articles constitute the best reference sources for information on specific topics. Data banks such as ERIC are of only limited usefulness because of their recency and title descriptor problems.

References

General Surveys

* Boorstin, Daniel J. "Widening the Communities of Knowledge." In The Discoverers, New York: Random House, 1983.

Authored by the librarian of Congress with an excellent bibliography, this history of communications considers memory, books, libraries, printing, languages, orthography, important contributors, and the times in which they lived. Highly recommended.

* Balmuth, Miriam. The Roots of Phonics: A Historical Introduction. McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1982.

An historical survey of phonics, writing systems, spelling, and reading instruction. An excellent though brief treatment of many reading related subjects and a good place to begin. Makes a special contribution in its treatment of 20th Century developments in reading instruction.

* Darnton, Robert. "What is the History of Books?" In Books and Society in History, edited by Kenneth E. Carpenter. New York and London: R.R. Bowker Company, 1983.

A description of the field by one of its principal leaders. Presents its complexity, immensity, interdisciplinarity, and newness. A good reference point for those who want to understand the shape and shapelessness of the discipline.

History of American Reading

* Smith, Nila B. "American Reading Instruction." I.R.A. Newark, Delaware, 1986.

History of American reading instruction organized by 8 periods. The most cited reference in the recent survey of graduate programs in reading. Newly republished and updated by H. Alan Robinson.

Ford, Paul L. The New England Primer. A History of its origin and development. Dodd, Mead and Company, 1897.

A history of the primer that dominated American reading instruction in the 18th Century.

Monaghan, E. Jennifer. A Common Heritage. Noah Webster's Blue-Back Speller, Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, The Shoe String Press Inc., 1983.

A scholarly and definitive analysis of Webster's important influence on American reading instruction through his Blue-Back Speller in the first years of the American Republic.

Warfel, Harry R. Noah Webster: Schoolmaster to America. New York: Reprinted by Octagon Books Inc., 1966.

The most well known of several biographies of a remarkable and versatile scholar, patriot, business, and family man.

Herman, Patricia A. "Southern Blacks Accounts of Learning to Read Before 1861." Reading Education Report, No. 53 (December 1984), Center for the Study of Reading, University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois.

Interesting ante bellum accounts of how slaves learned how to read.

Minnich, Harvey C. William Holmes McGuffey and His Readers. Detroit, Michigan: Republished by Gale Research Company, 1975.

By a Dean of a College of Education in McGuffey's own university, this is the best of generally weak literature on McGuffey and his contributions.

Commager, Henry S. "McGuffey and His Readers." Saturday Review, vol. 45 (January 16, 1962), pp. 50-51, 69-70.

The most succinct analysis of the effect of the McGuffey Readers on 19th Century America by a respected American historian.

Scully, James A. "A Biography of William Holmes McGuffey." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Cincinnati, Ohio, 1967.

The most complete of the scattered biographical materials on McGuffey.

Cranney, A Garr. "Noah Webster and William Holmes McGuffey: The Men and their Contributions to Reading Instruction." Contemporary Issues in Reading, Spring 1986, pp. 105-115.

A brief summary of biographical material and the contributions of each to American reading instruction.

Skallerup, Harry R. Books Afloat and Ashore. Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, The Shoe String Press, 1974.

A history of books, libraries, and reading among U. S. Navy Seamen during the age of the sail.

Mathews, Mitford M. Teaching to Read Historically Considered. University of Chicago Press, 1966.

A historical analysis and a strident indictment of the sight word instructional method of teaching reading during the progressive era of the late 19th and 20th Century. For an understanding of the whole period, see Cremin's prize winning The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957.

Huey, Edmund Burke. The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading. McMillan: 1908.

Reflects the status of the knowledge of reading of the early 20th Century. A much cited reference since its republication in 1968 reflecting the knowledge of the time in which it was first published in 1908. Implies that much of the contemporary knowledge about reading that seems to be new is old.

Reeder R.R. The Historical Development of School Readers and Methods in Teaching Reading. New York, N.Y.: Columbia University, 1900.

The most often cited reference of several decades ago.

Lamport, Harold B. A History of the Teaching of Beginning Reading, Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago, 1937.

A history of the teaching of elementary school reading instruction. Part of a dissertation examining European roots of American instructional practices, 1830-1900.

Gray, William S. "Reading: A Research Retrospective 1881-1941," edited by John T. Gutherie. I.R.A. 1984 reprint of a 1941 review in the Encyclopedia of Educational Research.

A review of the reading literature 1881-1941 by a recently honored scholar. Read Chall's forward for a present perspective of that review. Also for other information about Gray, see William S. Gray: Teacher, Scholar, Leader. Jennifer A. Stevenson (ed.), 1985. Published by I.R.A., Newark, Delaware.

* Venezky, Richard L. "The History of Reading Research" in Handbook of Reading Research, edited by P. David Pearson, N.Y. and London: Longman, 1984.

A century of the research in reading processes and instruction from their beginnings in the 1870's. An important recent chapter with an extensive bibliography. See also a brief earlier article in the American Psychologist, 1977, 339-345, "Research on Reading Processes: A Historical Perspective."

* Monaghan, E. Jennifer. "The Impact of Research in Reading Upon the Classroom: Aspects of the American Experience." In Reading: Research and Classroom Practice, Proceedings of 13th Conference of the United Kingdom Reading Association, edited by John Gilliland, 1976.

A historical review of American reading instruction. Concludes that prevailing philosophies of the day have more impact on school reading practices than research within the field.

Cook, Wanda D. "Adult Literacy Education in the United States." I.R.A. Newark, Delaware, 1977.

Organized by decade, 1900-1970, this readable analysis examines how events in U.S. history shaped adult literacy education. Reflects the Monaghan thesis in the previous reference.

* Moore, David W., Readence, John E., and Robert J. Pickelman. "An Historical Exploration of Content area Reading Instruction." Reading Research Quarterly, vol. 18, no. 4 (Summer 1983), pp. 419-438.

Recommendations for content area reading instruction historically considered under 5 topics: locus of instruction, reading demands of various subjects, study, reading materials, and age focus. Provides a useful historical context for modern approaches to this subject.

Laubach, Frank C. Forty Years with The Silent Billion. Tappan, N.J.: Flemming H. Revell Co., 1970.

This remarkable autobiography of Frank Laubach considers literacy and evangelism, the each-one-teach-one tutoring way as it developed in the U.S. and internationally, 1930-1970.

Cole, John Y., ed. Books in Action. The Armed Services Editions, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 1984.

An enthusiastic and interesting history of 1322 paperbacks that went to war in over 122 million copies.

Radencich, Marguerite C. "Two Centuries of U.S. Magazines for Youth," Journal of Reading (March 1986), pp. 495-505.

Summary of the history of American magazines for children and adolescents from the 18th century through the present.

Roser, Nancy L. "Teaching and Testing Reading Comprehension: An Historical Perspective on Instructional Research and Practices." In Promoting Reading Comprehension, edited by James Flood. Newark, Delaware: I.R.A., 1984, pp. 48-60.

A brief overview reflecting historical approaches to teaching and testing reading comprehension. Intended as an introduction to other articles in that volume.

Singer, Harry A. and Robert B. Ruddell (editors). Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading, 3rd edition. Section 1: "Historical Changes in Reading."

Short articles by Singer and McCullough historically reviewing reading research in the U.S.

History of Reading: Ancient and Medieval

Webster, Noah. "Origin of Language" in Introduction to An American Dictionary of the English Language. Vol. 1 (1828). New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970.

Webster presents his view that language did not evolve and that it was the "immediate gift of God." The historical development of languages is traced to his time with reference to scholarly and biblical sources.

Nibley, Hugh. "Genesis of the Written Word." In Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless. Salt Lake City, Utah: Publishers Press, 1978, pp. 101-109.

Supports the creationist view of the origin of language by extensive reference to ancient secular writing. A little known but important reference by a noted historian and linguist. Takes issue with traditional evolutionary explanations of the origins of writing.

Cranney, A. Garr and Valerie Holladay. "A Bible Corpus for Reading Professionals." Paper presented at IRA convention, New Orleans, 1985. ERIC No. 258144.

The role of reading in old and new testament societies. Includes an extensive corpus of annotated, computer extracted, reading related Bible references.

Kenyon, Frederic G. Books and Readers in Ancient Greece and Rome. London: Oxford University Press, 1932.

Three 1932 lectures presented at King's College covering the Greek and Roman periods and the papyrus, vellum, and codex forms.

Hendrickson, G.L. "Ancient Reading." The Classical Journal 25 (1929), pp. 182-196.

A much cited article that influenced subsequent writing about the role of oral reading in ancient and medieval times. Should be read in the context of the more recent and balanced article by Saenger.

* Saenger, Paul. "Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society." Viator, Vol. 13, 1982, pp. 367-414.

Provides a balanced treatment of roles of silent and oral reading in medieval times. Tempers the more one-sided analysis of Hendrickson, the previous reference.

* Davies, W.J. Frank. Teaching Reading in Early England. New York, N.Y.: Pitman Publishing, 1973.

A highly readable and recommended historical survey to 1612.

Thomas, Alan G. Great Books and Book Collectors. New York, N.Y.: Putnam's and Sons, 1975.

An illustrated account of the great books of medieval times by a British author. Includes accounts of public and private collections with emphasis on the efforts of Hunnington and Morgan in the U.S.

Research Methodology, Sources and Commentary

Graff, Harvey J. "Legacies of Literacy," Journal of Communication, 1982, pp. 12-22.

A discussion of the historical fallacies and cultural assumptions surrounding the literacy myth in western society. A table indicates typical sources for literacy study in its historical contexts.

* Gilstad, June R. "Methodology of Historical Research of Reading Instruction: Principles and Criteria," Reading World. March 1981, pp. 185-196.

Addressed to reading educators. This seminal article considers the relevancy and importance of the field; also considers history methodologies.

Graff, Harvey J. Literacy in History: An Interdisciplinary Research Bibliography. New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1981.

A 384 page bibliography divided into 13 sections with brief introductions for each.

* Raabe, Paul. "Library History and the History of Books: Two Fields of Research for Librarians." In Books and Society in History, edited by Kenneth E. Carpenter. New York and London: R.R. Bowker Co., 1983, pp. 251-254.

  A brief article by a noted German authority indicating the diversity and specialization of the history of the book and library science fields.

* Stahl, Norman A. et. al. "Avenues for Chronicling and Researching the History of College Reading and Study Skill Instruction." Journal of Reading (January 1986), pp. 334-341.

  A survey of the history of U.S. college reading and study skill instruction and a description of potential directions and methodologies of future historical research.

Historical Surveys of Reading Subfields

* Donelson, Kenneth L. and Aileen P. Nilsen. "Part Two: A Brief History of Young Adult Reading." In Literature for Today's Young Adults. Scott Foresman and Company, 1980, pp. 55-179.

  A historical survey of adolescent literature in three periods, 1800-1966.

* Huck, Charlotte S. and Doris Young. "Children's Books of the Past." Chapter II in Children's Literature in the Elementary School. New York, N.Y.: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1961.

  A historical survey of four centuries of children's literature. Overlaps somewhat with surveys of adolescent literature.

* Shera, Jesse. "Up the Centuries from Sumer." In Introduction to Library Science. Littleton, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, 1976.

  An overview of the history of libraries.

Karetzky, Stephen. Reading Research and Librarianship: A History and Analysis. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982.

  A library Science approach to reading research historically considered since 1900.

* Emery, Edwin and Michael Emery. The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media, 5th edition. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall Inc., 1984.

  A historical survey of journalism and other media to the present.

Special Topics

* Downs, Robert B. Books in My Life. Washington: Library of Congress, The Center for the Book, 1985.

  By a distinguished academic librarian, this published speech describes his scholarly work of a lifetime. His various books insightfully summarize the world's most influential books in their historical context from Egypt's Book of the Dead, to modern writing. The books are highly recommended but are not listed here. See the card catalog in any major library for specific titles.

Tuchman, Barbara W. "The Book." Washington: Library of Congress, The Center for the Book Address, October 17, 1979.

A brief history of the book from the earliest chaldean texts to the age of T.V. by a noted popular historian.

Parsons, Edward A. The Alexandrian Library: Glory of the Hellenic World. New York, N.Y.: The Elsevier Press, 1952

A history of the library of ancient times. See also a recent article by Richard A. Desroches. "The Library at Alexandria." Current Studies in Librarianship, Spring/Fall, 1983, pp. 23-29.

Willison, I. R. "On the History of Libraries and Scholarship." Washington: Library of Congress, Center for the Book Address, June 26, 1979.

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Recent Published Collections of Papers or Published Articles

(See annotation under Carpenter)

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Resnick, Daniel P. (ed.). Literacy in Historical Perspective. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1983.

Brooks, Greg and A. K. Pugh (editors). Studies in the History of Reading. Centre for Teaching of Reading, University of Reading School of Education with the United Kingdom Reading Association, 1984.

Carpenter, Kenneth E. (ed.). Books and Society in History. New York and London: R.R. Bowker Company, 1983.

Four recent anthologies under the heading of scholarly papers or published articles. They are representative of the diversity within the field and its international flavor.